

Smith, Pam

From: jean [bch@3rivers.net]
Sent: Monday, January 14, 2013 4:49 PM
To: Smith, Pam
Subject: TSEP-RRGL Testimony (Belt)

Town of Belt

70 Castner Street/ P.O. Box 453

Belt, Montana 59412

MAYOR: JOHN MASONOVICH

January 14, 2013

Dear Honorable Members of the Joint legislative Long Range Planning Subcommittee,

As evidenced by the nearly 150 requests for funding assistance from the TSEP and RRGL programs for infrastructure projects throughout the state, Montana's infrastructure is aging, deteriorating, and in many cases nearing the point of failure. The cost of needed infrastructure repairs, replacement or upgrades is far beyond the capability of the individuals and communities whose lives and livelihoods depend on reliable public facilities. The citizens and communities of Montana desperately need the TSEP and RRGL programs, and are relying on the LRP Committee and the entire Legislature to generously support programs like TSEP and RRGL. **Please do not let us down!** The ability of these agencies to provide sufficient public facilities funding is critical to many cities, towns and utility districts, which are held responsible for providing safe and reliable public services.

In my many years as Clerk/Treasurer for the Town of Belt, I have noticed a disturbing trend in State government, whereby the Department of Environmental Quality continues to impose more costly regulation with respect to the design and operation of water and wastewater systems. At the same time, funding for programs such as TSEP and RRGL has failed to keep pace with demand. In the case of the Belt wastewater system, we now find ourselves in a position where we have several years left to pay for improvements made in 1997 to our wastewater system in order to comply with the DEQ requirements in place at the time, and are now facing another sizeable loan because our system does not comply with current regulations. Adding insult to injury, our water storage tank is failing, and we have been unable to secure affordable funding for its replacement. It is long past time for State government to strike a balance between regulatory mandates and funding.

History aside, our current proposed wastewater system project was recommended for funding by the RRGL program. We are very thankful, and hope to find a way to use this grant in such a way that we can at least partially comply with the current regulations. Unfortunately, we were not successful with regard to our request for TSEP funding. Without the requested TSEP funding, it seems unlikely that we will be able to achieve full compliance with current and future regulations. We are however, continuing to pursue other funding options, and are somewhat optimistic about our chances. In the mean time, we urge the members of the LRP Committee to give serious and careful consideration to the possibility of supporting both the TSEP and RRGL programs to the full extent of the funding requests.

On behalf of the Mayor and Town Council, I thank you for your time and consideration, and trust that you will do your best for the citizens of this great state.

Sincerely,

Jean Fontana, Clerk-Treasurer

814